763 Death and Funeral Observances. The decline of the human body is regarded simply as part of the inevitable course of nature. When this occurs, the soul must leave. The butterfly is the symbol of life; when one dies, 'the butterfly leaves the body.'

When death approaches, valuables, such as jewelery, are removed from the person and the death-bed, because people are reluctant to use anything with which a person dies. These things are given to the monastery. A relative chants as the person is dying, to fix his mind upon the truths of Buddhism and to divert it from worldly goods and ties of kinship.

764 As soon as death occurs, everyone present cries and wails. Sometime before rigor mortis sets in, relatives bathe the corpse, using a new water pot for this purpose, and pouring the water over the body from foot to head, the opposite direction from that practiced by the living. If the water pot must be refilled at all, this must be done an odd number of times. The pot is then put outside the house, upside down, and anyone outside the family of the deceased may take it. Then another filled pot is placed underneath the bed of the corpse. His hair is dried and spread out, hanging loose. His jacket is put on backwards; his longyi is tucked in or tied at the back instead of the front. The two large toes are tied together, as are the thumbs; the arms are folded on the breast; and the body is covered with a white sheet. Money may also be placed in the mouth. This practice is sometimes attributed to the practice of earlier times when, it is said, bodies were simply abandoned; the belief is that then the deceased had to walk to the cemetery, where the grave-digger buried him and took the coins from his mouth in payment.

[535] The corpse must be watched at night; groups take turns at this duty. It is said that the night watch is kept to prevent malevolent spirits from stealing the body. An impending funeral may be the occasion for a pwe, an outdoor theatrical presentation, and gambling games. In such event, the proceeds from the gambling will go to the bereaved family to help them. The corpse, in a coffin, will be placed on a bier nearby the scene of the pwe. It is said that thus he does not become lonely.

Burial occurs as soon as the relatives can conveniently gather together. While the body lies in state there is open house for those who wish to come to pay their last respects. When ready for burial, the body is placed in a wooden coffin, and a sheet is placed over the coffin. The water pot, taken from beneath the bed, is carried behind the coffin as it is taken out. Water is sprinkled on the floor until the party is out of the house, at which point the pot is broken. The body is carried feet first towards the cemetery. As it is lowered into the grave, the relatives kneel and make obeisance. On the return trip from the cemetery one member of the party is required to carry the sheet and to refrain from looking back.

By the time the funeral party reaches the house the bed has been cleared away for disposal. A white cloth is spread on a mat in one corner of the room. The person bearing the cloth says, as if talking to the deceased, 'There is your seat.'

On the sixth day after death, the person who placed the white cloth for the deceased to sit on, carries a paper umbrella to the cemetery and sticks it into the grave, saying, 'I have come to call you for tomorrow's ceremony.' If the umbrella remains upright it means the deceased will return as requested.

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

888 To the Burmese, long life is a great blessing and an indication of merit earned. Long life is prayed for and old age greatly idealized.

The ideal aged person is one who has successfully reared a family, has grandchildren and a certain amount of material wealth. The aged are expected to be 887 retiring and unobtrusive in their behavior. They do not go out visiting very much; they eat less food; and avoid appearing too well dressed or jeweled when attending religious observances.

An attitude of resignation characterizes the outlook of the aged person in Burmese society. It is unheard of that aged people should work: a possible ex- [622] ception is the village headman, who, it is felt, should be a person of long experience. When aged people live with their children they assume the role of teachers of their grandchildren. Most of the time of elderly people is spent in activities centering around the pagodas and monasteries, organizing of religious festivals, and raising funds for the monks and charities. In fact, they take leading roles in such activities.

The elderly members of the household arise early to see that rice is cooked for the daily offering to the monks and to insure that the household altar is properly looked after. It is preferable for them to arise before dawn, for to do so is considered very meritorious.

[784] Certain of the taboos that apply to younger people, mostly those connected with death, do not apply to the aged.

761 *Death and Funeral Observances.* To the Burmese, the decline of the human body is part of the inevitable course of nature. When this occurs the soul must [775] leave. The butterfly is the symbol of life: when a person dies, "the butterfly leaves his body."

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25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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435. THE VETERAN.

floats a *pasò* or *tamèin*, according to the sex of the deceased. Figures of winged *kein-nayd* support the coffin. All these preparations are costly, but they are never omitted (except in the case of "unripe" deaths), for if the family of the deceased have not the means, the neighbours contribute. While the *dalâ* is preparing, the relatives and neighbours are entertained in a pavilion erected in front of the house. Music, games, and *pwè* are provided by day and by night to help them to pass the time. The Burman word for funeral is *mathâ*, a sorrowing; and the mourning of the relatives is open and loud. Death is spoken of with bated breath and true solemnity. It is not baldly stated that a person is dead, but that their life has ended. The dead are borne in tender memory. Nevertheless, the incidents of the funeral are so inconsistent with mourning that they receive point in a fable. The python snake with its gigantic size and forbidding aspect looks the king of venomous reptiles. And such, according to the satire, the python used to be. So potent was his venom that if he bit so much as the track of a creature it must die. On one occasion the serpent bit the foot-print of a man who had angered him, and crept to the village to enjoy his revenge. But he found nothing there to betoken sorrow. Music was playing and the people were dancing. This mortified him so that he climbed a lofty tree and spat all his venom forth. The preparation of the catafalque and the entertainment of the funeral guests are costly, but the offerings to the *yahán* are the chief expense. These are what give distinction to the funeral. As many *yahán* of the place and the surrounding country as the family can afford to present offerings to, are invited to precede the *cortège* to the cemetery. The offerings are all of identical nature and value. In the illus-

436. ENTERTAINING THE FUNERAL GUESTS.